Foreign Flag ships in Indian coastal waters

443. SHRI PASUMPON THA. KIRUTTINAN: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to permit foreign flag ships into Indian Coastal Water;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether there has been any opposition from the Shipping Corporation of India;

(d) what are the main reasons of their objection; and

(e) the remedial measures taken by Government to meet the objections of the Shipping Corporation of India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) and (b). A policy decision has been taken that Cabotage Law will be temporarily relaxed in respect of those foreign Shipping Lines which bring substantial number of transhipment containers.

(c) to (e) Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) felt that it may adversely affect their container traffic but had no objection for temporary relaxation on a limited scale. The impact, if any, of such temporary relaxation on Shipping Corporation of India will be closely monitored.

Utilisation of rivers for inland transport

444. SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have drawn up a comprehensive plan for better utilisation of the Rivers for Inland Transport;

(b) what are the major obstacles facing the Government in encouraging use of canals and rivers in Andhra Pradesh for river transport;

(c) whether it is a fact that only motorised traffic is being encouraged;

(d) what steps Government propose to take to encourage traditional crafts to ply rivers etc; and

(e) whether a pilot scheme would be formulated to give financial assistance to weaker sections who are in riverine transport traditionally in Andhra Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) Important waterways are declared as National Waterways. Central Government assumes responsibility for their comprehensive development for shipping and navigation. The Allahabad-Haldia stretch of the Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly rivers and the Sadiya-Dhubri stretch of Brahmaputra river have been declared as National Waterways. The Inland Waterways Authority of India is entrusted with the responsibility of the planned development of the National Waterways. State Governments are responsible for drawing such plans in respect of other waterways.

(b) The canals and rivers in Andhra Pradesh pose many problems for viabilty of Inland Water Transport operations like lack of necessary width and depth of channel, lack of cargo, encroachments on canal banks, etc.

(c) to (e) With a view to encouraging IWT Entrepreneurs including weaker sections, an Interest Subsidy Scheme is under implementation since 1980. Under the scheme, the difference between the normal rate of interest charged by Banks/ Financial Institutions and 5½ per cent in respect of loans taken for acquisition of new mechanised inland vessels as well as for mechanisation of country crafts, is given as subsidy by the Government.

445. [Transferred to 13th September, 1991]